



Health Alert

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Health Alert: Diarrhea Outbreak on the Increase

Avoid Swimming When Sick

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Increasing cases of cryptosporidium along the Wasatch Front have prompted the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) to issue this Health Alert. To date, more than 150 cases have been reported to the Davis County Health Department, the Salt Lake Valley Health Department, the Utah County Health Department and the Weber/Morgan Health Department. The number of people reporting cases of severe diarrhea continues to rise, and officials worry exposure won't decline until people who are sick, or who have recently been sick, decide to avoid public/private pools and recreational waters. People who have had diarrhea should not swim for two weeks after the diarrhea has ended. Cryptosporidium is a parasite that is chlorine resistant at normal levels used in pools and can be difficult to eliminate.

Of particular concern to the UDOH are individuals with compromised immune systems. "Anyone with a severely weakened immune system is at a higher risk for more serious disease," said UDOH Epidemiologist Rich Lakin. "In fact, exposure to cryptosporidium in those populations could lead to a life-threatening illness." Examples of persons with weakened immune systems include those with HIV/AIDS; cancer and transplant patients who are taking certain immunosuppressive drugs; and those with inherited diseases that affect the immune system. UDOH advises people with these conditions to consider avoiding swimming in recreational water sites until the risk has decreased or discuss the risk with their health care provider.

If you decide to engage in these recreational activities, officials say the best way to protect yourself and your family from this water-borne illness is to practice good hygiene. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has six suggestions to help you stay safe.

- Don't swim when you have diarrhea or for two weeks after recovering from diarrhea.

- Don't swallow any pool, lake or stream water.
- Practice good hygiene. Take a shower before swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Take the kids on frequent bathroom breaks and check diapers often.
- Change diapers in a bathroom and not at poolside or near recreational waterways.
- Wash your child thoroughly (especially the rear end) with soap and water before swimming.

For more information about cryptosporidium, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site at: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyswimming/>.

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The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.